

# Proposal for a Central Falls/Pawtucket Multi-Modal Transportation Center

An Economic Revitalization Strategy for Northern Rhode Island



PAWTUCKET CENTRAL FALLS STATION, PAWTUCKET, R. I.

*Prepared by The Pawtucket Foundation*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Pawtucket Foundation since 2001 has been investigating the potential for a multi-modal transportation center to be located on the site of the existing 1916 Pawtucket / Central Falls train station, out of service since the 1960's. Architectural and structural studies have been undertaken, and results of preliminary ridership and economic development studies, now underway, are summarized here.
- We believe that there is significant potential for reintroducing MBTA commuter service at the site of the existing historic station. In addition, the building itself may be re-used to create a commercial development focus for a traditional central city area. The MBTA has indicated an interest in exploring the potential for introducing commuter service to the site. The Pawtucket Foundation has accepted the leadership role in the investigation of this potential.
- In the Northern Rhode Island service areas we have studied, there has been a dramatic increase (up 80%) in the number of workers traveling more than 45 minutes to work since 1990. This indicates a shift toward ever more distant work locations among our residents. We believe this indicates a growing need for better transit connections to the metropolitan areas of both Providence and Boston.
- In addition, we believe we have identified a sizeable area intersected by major urban arterials (State Routes 114, 15, and 122), and at the convergence of the commercial districts of both Pawtucket and Central Falls, centered on a location which offers an opportunity to create a true **multi-modal transportation center**, with bus, bikeway, and taxi connections to all points within northern Rhode Island and Providence.
- We believe the re-introduction of commuter service to Pawtucket and Central Falls can help extend economic benefits to hundreds of transit-dependent workers living within a one-mile radius of the proposed Pawtucket / Central Falls Multi-Modal Transportation Center. Year 2000 Census information demonstrates that the Immediate Service Area (a one-mile radius surrounding the proposed transportation center) is a very densely populated area, containing over 37,000 residents, of whom 14,000 are workers between the ages of 16 and 65. A broader Extended Service Area, extending from Pawtucket / Central falls north- and westward to Interstate 295, contains 138,000 residents and 64,000 workers who can also share in the benefits of intercity commuter service.

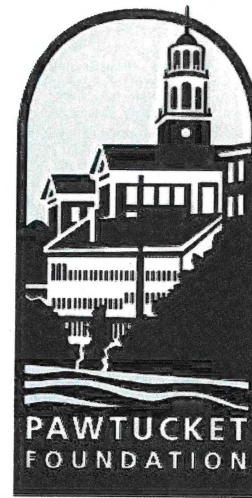


- In addition, we believe the re-introduction of rail commuter service to a Pawtucket / Central Falls multi-modal transportation center can help reduce the parking and traffic burdens on the South Attleboro and Providence Stations, which serve Rhode Island residents. The dense urban grid within an easy walking radius of the Pawtucket / Central Falls station allows for substantial daytime, on-street parking to meet commuter needs. In addition, there is potential for development of off-street parking within easy walking distance of the Pawtucket / Central Falls station.
- The Pawtucket / Central Falls Station is the center of a potentially vital central city mixed-use neighborhood. While the vacant station is currently a blighting influence on the neighborhood as a whole, neighborhood planning efforts sponsored by local agencies and Rhode Island Housing indicate a significant potential for community revitalization with the station as a necessary focal point.
- According to a study of 43 communities commissioned by The Great American Station Foundation,<sup>1</sup> the presence of an active train station has considerable economic advantages for small cities:
  - increasing employment opportunities to the new service area;
  - lifting average household income by a range of \$150 to \$575 per year;
  - raising existing property values, and consequently
  - increasing property tax revenues to the municipalities.
- The potential for enhanced commuter connections and transit access for the citizens of northern Rhode Island to the metropolitan Providence and Boston areas, as well as the potential economic benefits to the historic commercial centers of Pawtucket and Central Falls, justify a program of state, municipal, regional and federal cooperation to develop a multi-modal transportation center at the location we have identified.

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<sup>1</sup> Great American Station Foundation. *Economic Impact of Station Revitalization*. 2001.

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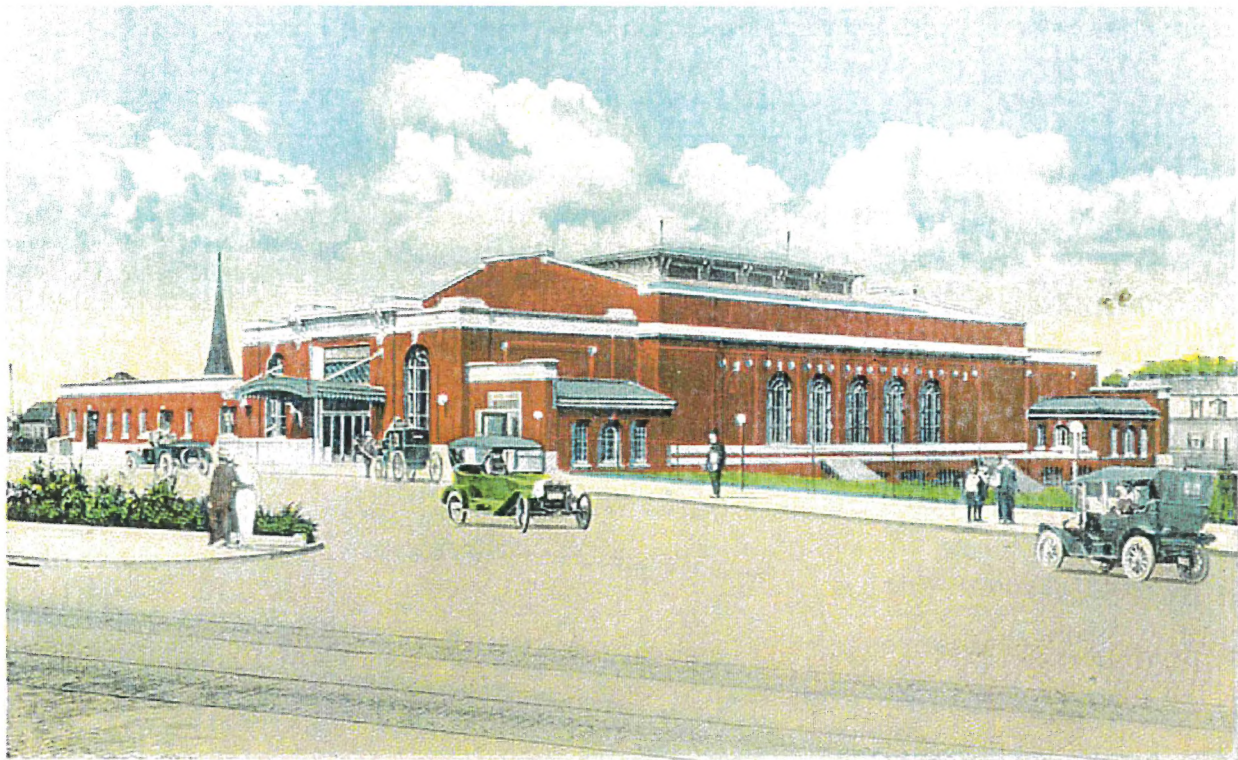
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Additional supporting materials and architectural studies are available from the Pawtucket Foundation





PAWTUCKET-CENTRAL FALLS STATION, PAWTUCKET, R. I.

## BACKGROUND

The Pawtucket-Central Falls Station, designed by the prominent New Haven railroad architect F.W. Mellor, opened to the public on January 13, 1916. As one of the new “railroad suburbs” of Boston, it was a vibrant social center for the community with 79 trains per day and an average of 70,000 passenger departures per month recorded at the height of operations in 1921.

The 40,000 square-foot, brick veneered Beaux Arts building over the tracks on the Pawtucket/Central Falls city line was built at a cost of \$250,000. The grandeur of the interior was said to resemble the original Penn Station in New York – lobbies on either side of the tracks opened to the free-span concourse, interior finishes included slate floor tile, stone walls, printed railroad motifs, and marble staircases. Skylights bore the official seals of the two cities and the state. Commuter amenities included a restaurant and a shop, separate lounges for men and women, telephones, and a newspaper stand.

Hailed as the finest railroad station on the line between Boston and New Haven, the regional traffic breathed vitality into the local economy for over forty years. In 1959, with the Pennsylvania Central Railroad bankrupt, the Station closed. Since that time the building has remained largely unoccupied. The Pawtucket Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to protecting the area’s architectural heritage, has twice placed the building on their Endangered Properties list.

The Pawtucket Foundation invited Goody, Clancy & Associates, an architectural, planning, and urban design firm headquartered in Boston, to develop conceptual access plans to the railroad platform— with the caveat they should reuse as little as possible of the existing building for commuter rail or bus connection purposes. The intention of the project was to design for a commuter connection in a way that would preserve the bulk of the building for other commercial or institutional redevelopment. Several options were explored making the assumption that the building enters into private ownership, with a portion of the building dedicated to passenger access to the north and southbound rail platforms.

In 2001 and following up on the design work in 2002, Rich Davis, Executive Director of the Pawtucket Foundation, and Vin Ceglie, Executive Director of the Blackstone Valley Community Action Program and member of the Pawtucket Foundation Board of Directors, met with Dennis DiZoglio, the Director of Planning for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The objective was to discuss a new Central Falls/Pawtucket connection in the context of MBTA regional service plans. Mr. DiZoglio has encouraged the Foundation to pursue these explorations and to present the results.

In addition, in 2001 the Slater Mill Historic Site, the John H. Chafee Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor, and the City of Pawtucket began planning for an upgrade to the connection between the Slater Mill Historic Site and the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center. These two sites, facing each other across Roosevelt Avenue in downtown Pawtucket, are currently divided geographically, visually, and functionally by the queue of RIPTA buses on Roosevelt Avenue. Community planning sessions in the Spring of 2002 led to current design work being undertaken by the City of Pawtucket. The Slater Mill Historic Site in 2002 began planning for a transition to a much more active “living history” presentation of its historic buildings, equipment, and collections. An enhanced programmatic connection between the Visitors Center and Slater Mill Historic Sites has encouraged a fundamental re-evaluation of the evolution of the Visitors Center site into a bus station, and whether such a station should continue to be located at its current site.

In addition, other community groups including The Pawtucket Foundation are concerned about the safety aspects of using the Visitors Center site on Roosevelt Avenue as a bus transfer node. The current situation, in which current transit users cross Roosevelt Avenue between buses, through busy two-way traffic to make transfer connections or to access the waiting room in the Visitors Center, creates the potential for serious and potentially fatal accidents.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*The new economy is built on innovation, collaboration, and connections – and a crucial ticket to participation in it is the ability to move freight, people, and information within metro regions and to points around the globe <sup>2</sup>*



### Local and Regional Economic Impact

The natural “gateway” location for a Multi-Modal Transportation Center with a multi-city, regional attraction can be found at the site of the historic Central Falls / Pawtucket train station, which straddles the active “Northeast Corridor” rail lines currently used both by Amtrak and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

The commercial development opportunities in the Station building, on the Station site, and in the immediate vicinity (a mixed-use commercial and residential area located on a major arterial commercial corridor linking Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Cumberland) could potentially be the catalyst for significant economic development, enhancing the tax base for both cities and elevating the values of properties in the vicinity. According to a study of 43 communities commissioned by The Great American Station Foundation,<sup>3</sup> the presence of an active train station has considerable economic advantages for small cities:

- increasing employment opportunities to the service areas by several hundred per site;
- increasing household income by \$150 to \$575 per year;
- increasing property values by \$15-90 million per community;
- increasing property tax revenues proportionately.

<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island Economic Policy Council. *A Rhode Island Economic Strategy: 10 Ways to Succeed Without Losing Our Soul*. September 2001. page 32

<sup>3</sup> Great American Station Foundation. *Economic Impact of Station Revitalization*. 2001.



The existing station building spans the active tracks used by the MBTA for the commuter rail from Providence (and potentially from Warwick) to Boston, and by Amtrak as part of the busy northeast corridor. Strategically located within the densely populated southern hub of the Boston Metro, the rail lines are a gateway to the densely populated cities of Central Falls, Pawtucket, Cumberland, and Lincoln. Reopening the Station would generate opportunities for working households of widely varying incomes to access employment in the greater metropolitan areas of both Providence and Boston. In addition, passenger rail access to the Pawtucket / Central Falls station will enhance the “gateway” attractiveness of the Blackstone Valley as a tourist destination, which generates approximately \$350 million annually into the Rhode Island economy (source: Bob Billington, Executive Director, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council).

With 14,000 workers between the ages of 16 and 65 from the immediate service area and over 64,000 workers from the Extended Service Area, the economic benefits for the community resulting from increased regional mobility are significant. In addition to those estimates of benefit derived from national sources, such as the studies undertaken by the Great American Station Foundation, the Pawtucket Foundation continues to explore the demographic segments from both the Immediate (one-mile) Service Area and the Extended Service Area (out to I-295) which would tend to contribute most significantly to use of a Multi-Modal Center and to commuter rail ridership.

#### **Benefits to Households: Employment and Income**

The Great American Station Foundation commissioned a 43-city study in 2001 to analyze the beneficial economic impacts of stations on communities in which stations were revitalized. The study was carried out by **Transportation Economics & Management Systems, Inc., (TEMS)**, using an *Economic Rent* model that predicts a range of economic impacts that are possible through station improvement projects as measured in terms of increased employment, household income, and property values.

Data for the two communities of Pawtucket and Central Falls were estimated using the impact figures modeled for a community in our size category (50,000 to 100,000 population) located in a “high density” rail corridor.

**Table 1.0** Economic Impact of Station Revitalization for High Density Corridor<sup>4</sup>

<i>High Density Corridors</i>			
<b>City Size</b>	<b>Employment Created (# of jobs)</b>	<b>Average Household Income Created (\$)</b>	<b>Increased Property Value (millions of \$)</b>
Large	958	703	138
Medium	684	581	101
Small	650	383	59
<b>Very Small</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>44</b>
Town	217	229	40

<sup>4</sup> Great American Station Foundation. *Economic Impact of Station Revitalization*. 2001.

This model suggests that up to 550 new jobs could be generated by the revitalization of the Pawtucket / Central Falls station. These jobs include direct (construction) jobs and jobs associated with operating the station, as well as the indirect employment generated from the “ripple effect” of new jobs created (using the impact estimate of 1.5 new jobs indirectly created by one new job).

The 43-city model also indicates that significant impacts accrue to households from the revitalization of a rail station. In a community our size, it is estimated that the average annual increase in income occurring as a result of a revitalized station could be on the order of \$300 per year. In Table 1.0 we have provided a range of estimates (at the lower end, \$150 per household per year, and at the upper end, \$575 per household per year, as detailed elsewhere in the Great American Station report (citation Table 2: Model Predictions of Economic Benefits, page 13). For purposes of estimation, the populations of Pawtucket and Central Falls are combined to provide a single economic unit of 92,000, in 36,743 households. Further, the Extended Service Area from which users of a multi-modal station would be drawn, includes a population of 137,716 people in 57,240 households.

In estimating benefits to households accruing from the revitalization of the Pawtucket / Central Falls station, we are looking primarily at the Immediate Service Area, constituting a one-mile radius around the station site; secondarily at the populations of Pawtucket and Central Falls as a whole.

**Table 2.0** Commuter Service Area, Pawtucket and Central Falls, and  
Estimates of Annual Economic Benefit

	Households in ISA		Total Households in Cities	Total Estimated Benefits to Cities	
	Estimated Total Benefits (Low)*	Estimated Total Benefits (High)**		Estimated Total Benefits (Low)*	Estimated Total Benefits (High)**
Pawtucket	\$1,542,867	\$4,669,201	30,047	\$5,708,930	\$17,277,025
Central Falls	\$1,275,850	\$3,861,125	6,696	\$1,272,240	\$3,850,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,818,717</b>	<b>\$8,530,326</b>	<b>36,743</b>	<b>\$6,981,170</b>	<b>\$21,127,225</b>
* Low estimate of \$150 per year per household. Source: Great American Station Foundation, <i>Economic Impact of Revitalization</i> (2001).					
** High estimate of \$575 per year per household. Source: Great American Station Foundation (2001).					

From the Immediate Service Area, the number of households totals 14,835. A “low” estimate of economic benefit, at \$150 per household per year, yields a total of \$2.23 million in economic benefit within the one-mile radius; while a “high” estimate (of \$575 per year per household), would provide \$8.5 million in total economic benefit per year.



Extending the analysis to the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls, as a whole, analogous estimates of annual benefit would yield a low estimate of \$5.5 million in benefit for the 36,743 households in both cities; while a “high” estimate would yield \$21.1 million in annual economic benefit.

Because of the positive impact of the proximity of the existing South Attleboro station to households residing in the eastern (east of I-95) portion of Pawtucket, an argument could be made that many of the direct benefits of station availability on household incomes have already been realized in that area. However, there are significant indirect benefits, including increased employment, as well as the positive impact on commercial property valuation, shifting some portion of the property tax burden to non-residential properties, that could be realized by residents city-wide.

### Impact on Property Values

The TEMS study estimates an increase in property values of \$25 to \$65 million accruing as a benefit of a revitalized train station in a community our size. The estimates in this study appear to indicate a one-time increase in value over an unspecified period. As a test of this estimate, our independent analysis suggests a somewhat wider range of benefits over a five-year period.

**Table 3.0** Estimates of Impact of Multimodal Station Development on Downtown Pawtucket Property Values

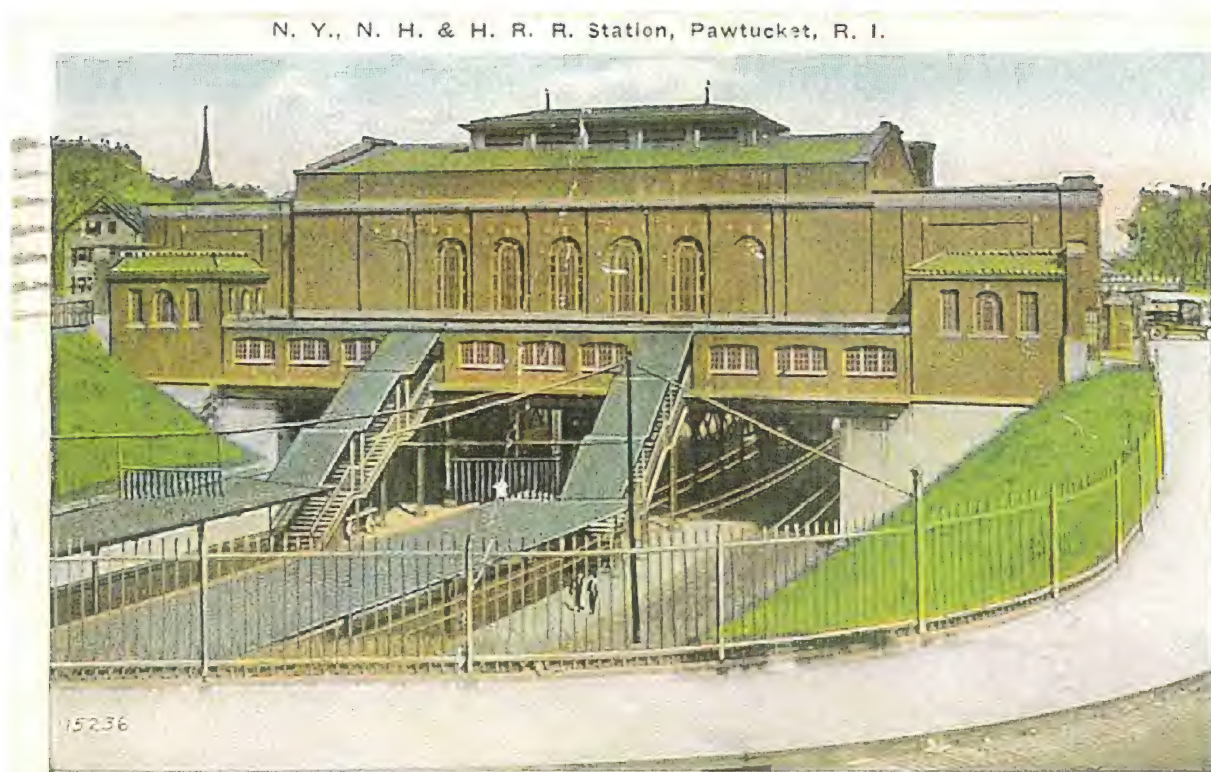
Total Taxable Valuation, Residential and Commercial	Actual	Low Impact*	Medium Impact**	High Impact***
2002	\$96,308,000	\$100,160,320	\$104,012,640	\$107,864,960
Year Two	---	\$104,166,733	\$112,333,651	\$120,808,755
Year Three	---	\$108,333,402	\$121,320,343	\$135,305,806
Year Four	---	\$112,666,738	\$131,025,971	\$151,542,503
Year Five	---	\$117,173,408	\$141,508,048	\$169,727,603
Year Six	---	\$121,860,344	\$152,828,692	\$190,094,915
Total Six-Year Increase in Downtown Values	---	\$21,700,024	\$48,816,052	\$82,229,955
Estimated Total Six-Year Impact in Percent	---	121.7%	146.9%	176.2%
Property Tax Impact (Six-Year Impact, Estimated Total Tax Revenue Increase)	---	\$651,000	\$1,464,480	\$2,466,900
* Annual impact, at 4% rate of increase in value				
** Annual impact, at 8% rate of increase in value				
*** Annual impact, at 12% rate of increase in value				

Journalistic evidence of the impact of train station development throughout the Boston metropolitan area on residential property values suggests annual increases in value on the order of 4% to 12% on stations opened since 1997. Using a range of hypothetical increases in annual commercial valuation of 4, 8, and 12%, The Pawtucket Foundation has estimated the impact of a multimodal station on property values in downtown Pawtucket, an area for which The Pawtucket



Foundation has obtained actual valuations for the year 2002. Downtown Pawtucket, a mixed-use commercial, institutional, and residential area, lies completely within the one-mile radius of the Immediate Service Area, with the station located on its northern boundary with Central Falls. This is the area of Pawtucket that stands to benefit the most from its proximity to a revitalized rail station.

Our analysis suggests a “low” impact on the order of a \$21.7 million increase in property values in downtown Pawtucket over six years, and a “high” impact of \$82.2 million depending upon the rate of increase in value. The impact estimated in the Great American Station Foundation / TEMS study lies within this range for the size of the Pawtucket / Central Falls community. However, we have not attempted to estimate the impact on property values in Central Falls—which would likely be just as significant as that estimated for Pawtucket, and possibly even larger. It seems reasonable to estimate at this stage that both Pawtucket and Central Falls would **each** realize an increase in property values, over time, with roughly equal potential impact, as a result of a revitalized station. Using the mid-range estimate in our analysis, the increase in property valuation could reasonably reach \$48.8 million in each city over a half-decade. This would amount to an estimated total of \$1.46 million in property tax collections over the period, or about \$293,000 additional in property tax revenues per year, *for each City*.



## COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

*...[A] critical missing tool for urban revitalization [is] development equity. Enhancing the physical condition of the neighborhood will restore a sense of pride and attract needed private investment, while improving health and safety for the people who live there.<sup>5</sup>*



*A Farmers Market takes place at the abandoned railroad station on weekends during the summer months.*

### Barton Street Neighborhood Planning

For over forty years the now dilapidated and vandalized Central Falls-Pawtucket Train Station on Broad Street has been largely vacant. In this condition it has been a blighting influence on the surrounding neighborhood, which has experienced a steady decline since the closing or relocation of textile and other manufacturing.

In 2001, a group of agencies concerned about the neighborhood's growing criminal issues — namely drug use, prostitution, and excessive noise — formed a steering committee to assess the neighborhood and help visualize its future. Financed with a grant from Rhode Island Housing, the Steering Committee for the Barton Street Neighborhood Revitalization project hired a consultant to coordinate a community needs analysis. An extensive, tri-lingual outreach effort began in an effort to respond to the neighborhood's cultural diversity. The result of this outreach effort is a strategic plan for the neighborhood's revitalization.

Fundamental among the revitalization opportunities open to this densely populated urban neighborhood is the revitalization of the train station. This is reflected in an Opportunities Map generated by the Neighborhood Community Planning process.

The Action Plan included the restoration of the train station as an essential objective of two goals for the neighborhood, to “create an atmosphere that supports public safety and community pride”<sup>6</sup> and to “strengthen the viability of business community in neighborhood”<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> RI Economic Policy Council. *A Rhode Island Economic Strategy: 10 Ways to Succeed Without Losing Our Soul*. September 2001. (13)

<sup>6</sup> Pawtucket-Central Falls Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. March 2002.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*



## REGIONAL AND LOCAL TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

### Immediate Service Area

According to the 2000 Census<sup>8</sup> there is a densely concentrated population base (over 37,000 people) living within the Immediate Service Area, an area defined as the one-mile radius around the site of the proposed Transportation Center. Since 1990<sup>9</sup> the population of this community has experienced growth of 9.4%. The labor force from this Service Area contains 14,386 workers age 16 or over. Median household income among the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the station, is a very modest \$24,745.

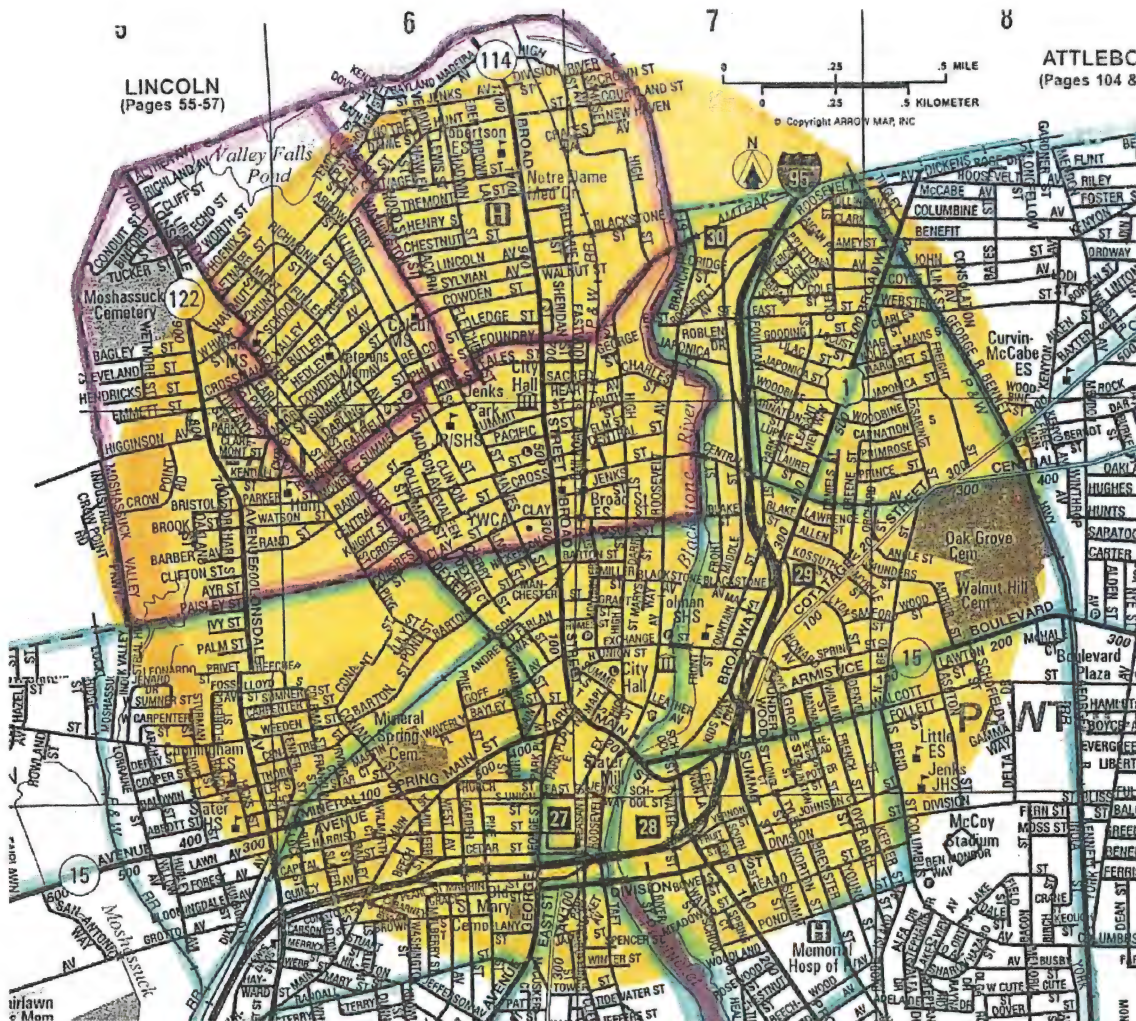


Figure 1.0 Immediate Service Area

<sup>8</sup> Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data.

<sup>9</sup> 1990 Summary Tape File 3 (STF 3) - Sample Data.

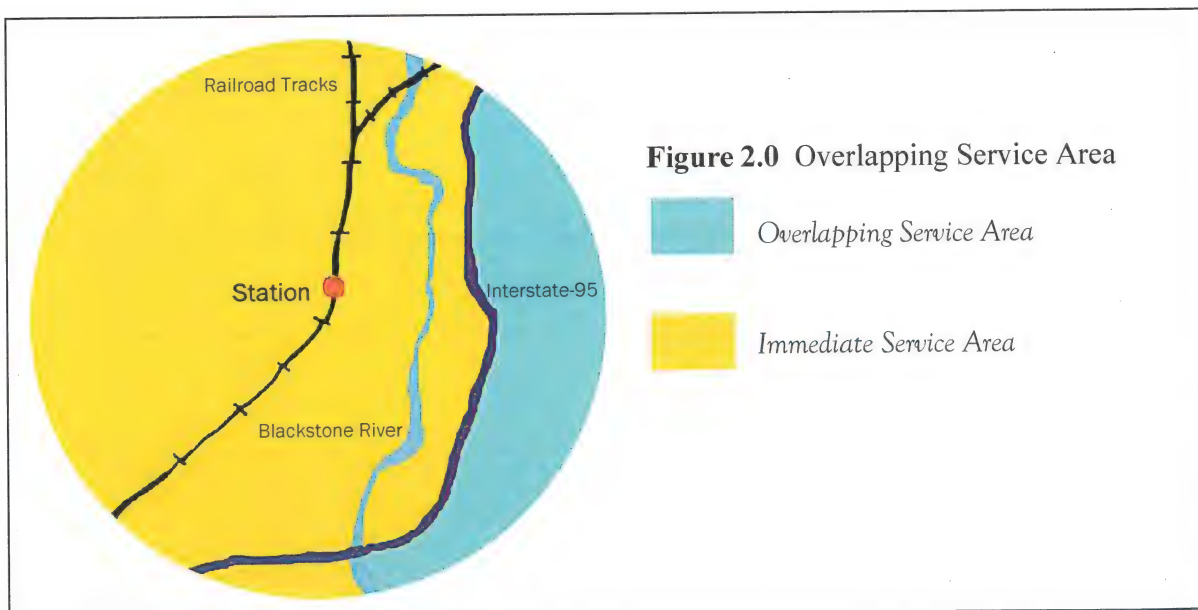


Census data from 1990 and 2000 demonstrate a dramatic increase in the number of workers in the northern Rhode Island Service Area traveling more than 45 minutes to work since 1990:

- Of the 1,447 workers in the Immediate Service Area between the ages of 16-65 that travel over 45 minutes to work, 270 workers (nearly 20% of the total) rely on public transportation as their primary means of getting to work.
- Although most individuals still rely upon a private vehicle for transportation to work, there is an increasing number of workers age 16 and over that are using public transportation as their primary means of transportation. Since 1990 this number has increased 27.5%.
- Of all public transportation users in the Immediate Service Area, 81% of workers use the bus, an increase of over 25% since 1990.
- Rail users from within this concentrated area have increased by 37.6% since 1990, now comprising more than a tenth of those workers aged 16 to 65 who use public transportation for their journey to work. The modest household incomes within these Pawtucket and Central Falls neighborhoods indicate that access to a rail connection to the larger metropolitan area served by the MBTA offers significant opportunities for upward economic mobility.

### Overlapping Service Area

It is important to note that within the one mile Immediate Service Area there is a group of current rail users (residents east of I-95, north of the River) that may continue to use the South Attleboro station. We have identified this group as the Overlapping Service Area (OSA). Census data shows that of the approximately 65 current ISA rail users, 72% of those passengers reside in the OSA. This statistic can be largely attributed to the proximity and the ease of access to the South Attleboro commuter rail station. Parking and site amenities will most likely be the determining factors of choice between the South Attleboro and Pawtucket/Central Falls station.



### Extended Service Area

The Extended Service Area is the area from which we would expect at least 65% of the potential inter-city commuters for a Pawtucket / Central Falls Station. This area is defined by Route 295 for its northern and western borders, on the east by the Rhode Island / Massachusetts and Route 15 to the south, and shows a population of 137,716 people in the 2000 Census reports. Additional riders can be expected from areas which overlap the current Extended Service Areas for the Providence and South Attleboro stations, but from which rail travelers could more easily access the Pawtucket / Central Falls station.

The Extended Service Area has a working population of 64,415 with 13,000 working out-of-state and 1,593 employed in a Central City that is not Providence. Worcester and Boston are the obvious alternative central city worksites, but the Year 2000 Census documents published to date do not yet provide the detailed sampling data which will enable us to specify actual journey-to-work destinations. While Census data indicate that these out-of-state commuters are employed outside the Rhode Island statistical area, as defined by the 2000 Census, more research will be undertaken to determine actual work destinations, length of commute, and so forth. Clearly, the workers from the Northern Rhode Island Extended Service Area, as we have defined it, who are commuting to the Boston metro area and especially its core area within Route 128, are potential candidates for rail ridership.

Already 350 commuters in the Extended Service Area use the train for their journey to work. Of 1,734 workers in this larger area that use public transportation as their primary journey-to-work mode, 1,257 (72%) of this group use the bus as public transportation, while fully 20% of public transportation users from this very extensive, and predominantly suburban Northern Rhode Island community use commuter rail in their journey to work.

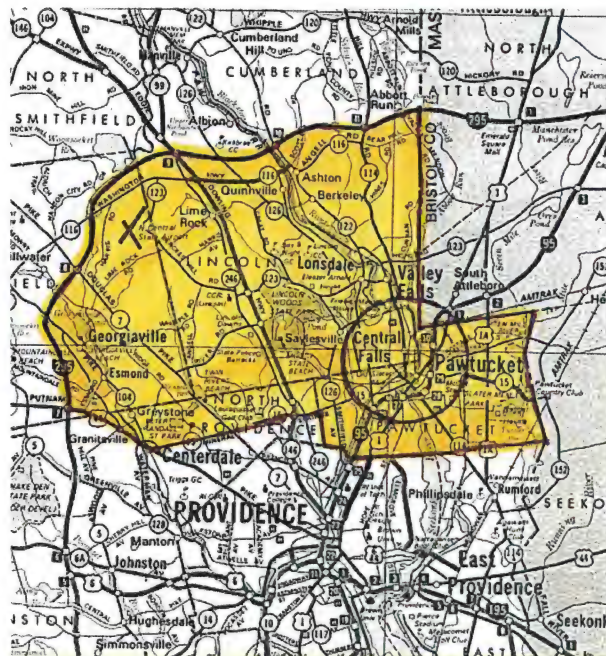


Figure 3.0 Extended Service Area

## A COMMUTER CONNECTION WITH A MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITY

*Providence is the hub of the southern sub-market of this region, which – with three million people—is the largest and fastest growing sub-market in the Metro.<sup>10</sup>*

### The Need for a Multi-Modal Facility: Bus Ridership

Public transit users for journey-to-work have been identified within both the Immediate Service Area (ISA), encompassing a one-mile radius around the projected multi-modal station site, as well as for an Extended Service Area (ESA) encompassing Pawtucket, Central Falls, and portions of Cumberland, Lincoln, and North Providence extending as far as Interstate 295.

**Table 4.0** Daily transit ridership, journey to work

	ISA	ESA
Current bus ridership, journey to work	477	1257
Current train ridership, journey to work	65	350

Many of the riders from these service areas make connections or wait for service at the current RIPTA bus station located at the Visitors Center, the site of the former Peerless Building. This facility serves 15,000 transit users per year, according to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.

According to the annualized ridership figures provided by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)<sup>11</sup>, the 11 lines (see chart below) that pass through downtown Pawtucket currently service 2,882,966 passengers. There is only one bus route that currently passes the abandoned rail depot and that line is already being used by nearly a quarter-million people. The majority of lines terminate at the Blackstone Valley Visitor's Center.

<sup>10</sup> RIPEC. *10 Ways to Succeed...*page 5

<sup>11</sup> RIPTA annualized ridership data by line for year end June 31, 2002. Numbers may be somewhat suppressed due to limited availability of automatic passenger counters.



**Table 5.0**  
RIPTA Annualized Ridership Data by Line

Bus Route	Riders
Route 99 Providence-Pawtucket	1,459,172
Route 42 Hope Street	575,294
Route 78 Beverage Hill Ave	141,698
Route 79 Columbus	56,345
Route 80 Armistice	63,349
Route 76 Central	64,354
Route 77 Benefit-Broadway	94,987
Route 71 Broad Street <sup>12</sup>	230,531
Route 75 Dexter	81,148
Route 72 Weeden	52,382
Route 73 Mineral Spring Ave	63,706
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2,882,966</b>



**Figure 4.0** Current RIPTA bus routes

The current bus service for Pawtucket is outdated, following a model of travel patterns and mobility needs created in 1964 that focused on the mills as destinations. RIPTA has identified the Pawtucket/Central Falls community as a focus area for restructuring in their comprehensive multi-year strategic plan targeted at improving transit services throughout the state of Rhode Island Transit 2000. Assuming that sufficient resources were made available, RIPTA would be willing to advance their updated agenda for downtown Pawtucket.

Furthermore, the site of the current facility at the intersection of Roosevelt and Main Streets in Pawtucket is not ideal. With the continuing growth in the number of visitors to the Slater Mill Historic Site and the Blackstone Valley Tourist Council offices, bus traffic at the site has detracted from—rather than enhanced—the needed ambience for visitors and tourists. The City of Pawtucket is currently working on ways to enhance connections across Roosevelt Avenue between the Visitors Center and the Slater Mill Historic Site, under the assumption that more attractive and safer connections across that major city street will improve the use of both sites.

<sup>12</sup> Route 71 is the only bus route that currently passes the train station.

Bus traffic currently divides the Visitors Center from the Slater Mill Historic Site, particularly since buses tend to queue in the street directly between the two locations. This creates not only a visual disconnect between the Visitors Center and the Historic Site but also creates a very real safety hazard, with bus riders (north or southbound) crossing between stopped buses and across two lanes of moving vehicular traffic.

The potential for use of a new Multi-Modal facility can be estimated by analyzing the patterns of ridership which currently converge at the existing station at Roosevelt and Main. In addition to accommodating current ridership, we believe there is significant potential to add new bus riders to a Multi-Modal Station which would

- allow for safe and convenient transfers between bus routes
- provide commuter access to rail service
- provide easy access, in an attractive commercial setting, to other services needed by commuters, such as day care, dry-cleaning, video drop-off, convenience shopping, and so forth.

#### **The Need for a Multi-Modal Facility: Commuter Ridership Scenarios**

Currently, 2,300 daily commuters board trains in Providence and South Attleboro. The MBTA commuter trains from Providence make 11 round trips between Boston and Providence. The overall rate of increase in actual use of the South Attleboro and Providence line is the largest among any of the metropolitan commuter lines served by the MBTA.

The expansion of MBTA commuter rail service to Providence is the result of an inter-state agreement between RI and MA transportation officials. Part of this agreement provided for a train servicing facility within the city limits of Pawtucket. Trains at the end-of-day commuter run are serviced in Pawtucket before they return to service the following day from Providence.

**Table 5.0** Providence and South Attleboro Inbound Boardings, MBTA Commuter Rail

	1995	2000
Providence Inbound Boardings	640	819*
South Attleboro Inbound Boardings	1,045	1,517
<b>Total Boardings for Providence &amp; South Attleboro</b>	<b>1,685</b>	<b>2,336</b>

\* Note: this number estimated from MBTA sources based on growth rates, 1995-2000 for Providence and South Attleboro boardings. Year 2000, Source: MBTA, with additional estimates by the Pawtucket Foundation.



Given current ridership demand which has been documented at the Providence and South Attleboro stations by the MBTA, we believe that it is not unreasonable to set a current target for inbound boardings at a new Pawtucket / Central Falls Multi-Modal Station of 1200 per day. In effect, such a target if realistically determined would represent currently "unmet" demand at an intermediate station site—between existing Providence and South Attleboro stations. Part of this potential demand consists of the existing 350 train riders who according to 2000 Census data, live in the Extended Service Area as we have defined it. In this scenario, approximately 850 inbound boardings could potentially be drawn to a new Multi-Modal Station site, if conveniently located between Providence and South Attleboro. At least some portion of these could be existing riders particularly at the South Attleboro station, if accessible parking opportunities could be provided at or near a new Multi-Modal Station site. However, we believe a significant portion of new demand could be generated from among the 13,000 out-of-state workers who live in the Extended Service Area, and more specifically, from among the 1,600 workers from the Extended Service Area who commute to a central city location in another state (a census-defined category for work destination which we believe primarily represents Boston).

In addition, historic data trends show that actual ridership has increased throughout the 1995-2000 period at a rate of 5.6% per year. By the time of a projected opening of a Multi-Modal Station Facility, we believe that potential boardings from a Pawtucket / Central Falls station could climb to approximately 1600 per day if a current target of 1200 inbound boardings per day is justified.

Research into ridership potential, as more detailed census data are published, will continue. We also intend to apply a similar level of analysis to the Extended Service Area centered on the South Attleboro station, to learn more about the geographic area and distance from which rail commuters to that station are drawn. This we believe will assist us to better estimate the number of potential boardings that can be drawn from Northern Rhode Island.

### Regional Access and Parking Demand

Re-opening the existing Pawtucket/Central Falls Station as a multi-modal transit center would reconnect the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls to the urban transit network of Boston, providing a link to the regional transportation network and to employment opportunities throughout the Boston metropolitan region including Providence. The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) provides frequent bus service along Broad Street, the main commercial corridor through the neighborhood, connecting commercial areas of Pawtucket and Central Falls. The station is well positioned to serve as a transit connector for State routes 122, 114, and 15—major urban arterials which lead to all parts of the northern Rhode Island commuter rail service area within the arc of Interstate 295.

At present, train commuters must travel to South Attleboro, MA or Providence to connect to the MBTA commuter line. The South Attleboro station is accessible primarily by private automobile, and yet parking supply, as estimated by the MBTA in 2001, was already nearly filled to capacity.<sup>13</sup>

It is worth noting that a new Multi-Modal station, insofar as it may capture some existing ridership from the existing South Attleboro and Providence stations, in effect could serve to offset parking demand at those two sites, which is already pushed to the limits of availability. In this way, a new Multi-Modal station which provided an alternative commuter boarding site, could extend the future capacities of the existing commuter rail stations, offsetting otherwise needed investment in parking garages or development of additional (and more remote) surface parking. A Multi-Modal Station which would serve Pawtucket and Central Falls, would further allow for access by means other than private auto, such as bus or cab, and would also allow for pedestrian access within a walkable distance, to a significant nearby residential population within the one-mile Immediate Service Area.

In summary, we believe the re-introduction of commuter service to the Pawtucket / Central Falls station- in addition to the individual and community economic benefits which can occur- can help reduce the parking and traffic burdens on the South Attleboro and Providence Stations. The dense urban grid within an easy walking radius of the Pawtucket / Central Falls station allows for substantial daytime, on-street parking to meet commuter needs. In addition, there is potential for development of off-street parking within easy walking distance of the Pawtucket / Central Falls station.

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<sup>13</sup> MBTA. Commuter Rail and Rapid Transit Parking Demand Forecasts, Draft Report. September 2001.



### The Growth of Commuter Rail Service in Southern New England

The growth of demand for commuter rail service within southern Massachusetts has been well documented. Both Fall River and New Bedford were planning for new commuter lines and stations for MBTA service by 2005. Within the last year, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation had to deliver the unwelcome news that this expansion of rail lines to those two communities could not happen before 2008. Even in spite of this delay, and before rail service facilities were even completed, the cities of Fall River and New Bedford had already begun to experience some of the benefits of rail service, with an increase in property values the obvious sign.

With the delay in opening new MBTA commuter rail service to Fall River and New Bedford, we believe that the introduction of new commuter rail service to Central Falls / Pawtucket has a significant and strategic opportunity.

- Providing new commuter station and platform facilities at the existing Pawtucket / Central Falls station site will be far less expensive than the required construction of new facilities in Fall River and New Bedford. The ability to add new ridership with only a modest investment of resources, as opposed to adding new rail track, stations, and servicing facilities, gives Northern Rhode Island an advantage in bringing a new Multi-Modal facility on line, before Fall River and New Bedford lines are completed.
- Addition of a Multi-Modal facility to serve an Extended Service Area including much of Northern Rhode Island is not intended to create any capital expenditures for the MBTA. However, the addition of new ridership at any point within the vast MBTA network will create additional operational costs in the form of labor, and potentially for rolling stock if existing train capacities are currently at their limit. In this competition, the facility opening soonest will have the advantage of a stronger claim on those constrained operational resources.

## SUMMARY

In the multi-state competition for regional transportation advantage, Pawtucket and Central Falls have

- An existing historic station, ideally located. Although in need of substantial renovation, the existing Pawtucket / Central Falls station is already ideally located on the Northeast Corridor rail line which is used by the MBTA.
- A dense working population—14,000 workers within a mile of the proposed Multi-Modal Station, with 64,000 workers within the extended service area bounded by Interstate 295. Significant numbers of our workers commute to locations out of state, including to other central cities such as Boston.
- Accessibility by a variety of transportation modes (bus, car, bike) as well as by pedestrians.
- Available on-street parking, and the ability to develop additional off-street parking, within reasonable walking distances of a multi-modal transportation facility.

Communities such as Pawtucket and Central Falls, though suffering from a decades-long cycle of disinvestment, retain the benefits of a significant historic investment in basic infrastructure. In the competition for regional economic growth, that is the primary advantage we have, and upon which we can capitalize. Communities with substantial infrastructure investments rooted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century can ill afford to throw away those advantages and simultaneously hope to attract current investment for new facilities and sites.

Conversely, the existence of a significant legacy and heritage—historic, architectural, geographic, and demographic—gives our own urban residential and commercial neighborhoods an advantage which can be used to the collective benefit of our urban communities and to neighboring suburban communities in Rhode Island. A multi-modal transportation center provides an excellent opportunity to take advantage of the unique heritage, location, and urban character represented by Pawtucket and Central Falls.

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